AMERICAN SAMURAI

MYTH, IMAGINATION, AND THE CONDUCT OF BATTLE IN THE FIRST MARINE DIVISION, 1941–1951

CRAIG M. CAMERON
Old Dominion University

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INTRODUCTION

IMAGERY AND INSTRUMENTALITY IN WAR

"The sincere admiration of the entire Third Fleet is yours for the hill[-]blasting, cave[-]smashing extermination of 11,000 slant-eyed gophers. It has been a tough job extremely well done." So read Admiral William F. Halsey's congratulatory message to the troops who had seized the island of Peleliu in October 1944. Coming from one of the most outspokenly racist officers in the Navy, Halsey's epithet might be dismissed as nothing more, perhaps, than an example of typical wartime hyperbole and personal bombast except for the apparent coincidence that the language and imagery used by Halsey find echoes throughout the ranks of the American military services among those who contributed directly to the barbarization of the Pacific War. Ernie Pyle, unofficial voice of the common GIs in the European theater of operations, recorded his impressions after he traveled to the Pacific in early 1945 and spoke at length with soldiers, sailors, marines, and airmen about the enemy: "In Europe we felt our enemies, horrible and deadly as they were, were still people. But out here I gathered that the Japanese were looked upon as something subhuman and repulsive; the way some people feel about cockroaches or mice." Simply seeing a group of prisoners, Pyle wrote, "gave me the creeps, and I wanted to take a mental bath after looking at them."[1]

Whether a fleet admiral in command of devastating fast carrier raids on the Japanese home islands or a common rifleman personally confronting "slant-eyed gophers" on Peleliu and elsewhere, what these Americans thought about the enemy, themselves, and the world around them shaped the character of the Pacific War. Combat between the Americans and Japanese was conducted with tremendous intensity and frequently punctuated by acts of savage barbarism, whether measured on the grand scale, like the Bataan

1 Halsey message is quoted in letter dated 14 May 1947 from Paul J. Mueller to Admiral William F. Halsey; Paul J. Mueller Papers, U.S. Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks. Ernie Pyle, *Last Chapter* (New York: Henry Holt, 1945), 5. Having survived some of the worst fighting in Europe, Pyle's death on Ie Shima seemed to confirm the images he used here to describe the Japanese.

death march and the bombing of Hiroshima, or on the level of the individual who collected bones or ears as trophies from the enemy dead.[2] What is left inadequately explored – indeed, often unquestioned – is how the barbarization of the war related to the often abstract images men carried onto its battlefields. Myth and imagination preceded and gave form to action by shaping expectations, and when combatants projected their assumptions onto people, events, and situations, they molded the landscape of their battlefields. The reification of abstract images gave them a historical identity and deadly role of their own. Any attempt to address the subject of the barbarization of the war requires closer consideration than hitherto given to the precise relationship among the acts themselves, the operative instrumentalities of war – those elements governed by putatively rational rules included under the general rubric of "doctrine" – and the underlying images and myths that determined the development and employment of the instrumentalities themselves.[3]

More than a century before the "Fat Boy" culminated the slaughter of the Pacific War in a blinding flash of light, the Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz wrestled with ideas about the nature of war and violence that defied exact or reassuring combination. How, he asked himself, do you define war, "a true chameleon" that changes color to match its changing background. In partial answer, he listed the composite characteristics that make war distinct from any other human endeavor:

> As a total phenomenon, its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity – composed of primordial violence, hatred, and enmity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its elements of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.[4]

2 James J. Weingartner, "Trophies of War: U.S. Troops and the Mutilation of Japanese War Dead, 1941–1945," *Pacific Historical Review* 61 (February 1992): 53–67.

3 John Dower's study *War without Mercy* (New York: Pantheon, 1986) examines graphic and verbal images in both Japan and the United States to demonstrate "how stereotyped and often blatantly racist thinking contributed to poor military intelligence and planning, atrocious behavior, and the adoption of exterminationist policies" (x). The scope of Dower's study, however, does not include linking clearly the images he discusses, which were intended primarily for the consumption of civilians and raw recruits, to military doctrine and day-to-day behavior on the battlefield.

4 Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 89.

Nobody who had fought across the hellish landscape of Iwo Jima, watched kamikaze aircraft run the gauntlet of fire to hurtle into American warships, or witnessed from the ground the immolation of tens of thousands of civilians in mass incendiary raids would question the elemental power of Clausewitz's first characteristic. Clausewitz himself, however, by dismissing wartime hatred as a "natural force," effectively placed it beyond human control. He thereby dismembered his trinity and created a bipolar framework – the more familiar war as an art and a science – upon which he then erected his theory. Yet the Pacific War witnessed the mobilization of ideas and images for the express purpose of stirring up the elemental force of wartime hatred and harnessing it to military policy. Whether in the context of the Pacific War or some other specific case, one challenge for military thinkers and historians today is to examine more closely the point at which all three elements of Clausewitz's trinity meet.

Historical tradition, like Clausewitz's theory, has kept the individual elements artificially separate and compartmentalized. It would be unfair to hold Clausewitz responsible for this shortcoming, because he was understandably constrained by his interest in explicating a theory of broad applicability. Nevertheless, he represents better than anyone else the process by which this occurred. Giving careful consideration to the distinctions between art and science as applied to war, Clausewitz vaguely defined the object of art as "creative ability" and that of science as "pure knowledge." In the best Hegelian dialectic, he then concluded that war was neither art nor science but a synthesis of the two and distinct from both. From the nagging question of how the elements actually combined, he sought refuge in two ways: first, he united the art and science of war in special individuals possessed of military genius; and second, he swept the messier aspects under the accommodating rug he labeled "moral factors." Clausewitz plainly recognized that the towering majority of soldiers are not possessed of Napoleonic genius and that "moral factors" defied neat categorization or thorough treatment, but he had to settle for frequent, often pithy, admonitions not to ignore such intangibles while concentrating on the scientific principles.[5] For Americans in general,

5 The elements recur throughout Clausewitz's work, but he most clearly states his arguments in Book 1, Chapter 1, "What Is War?"; Chapter 3, "On Military Genius"; Book 2, Chapter 3, "Art of War or Science of War"; and Book 3, Chapters 3–5, on moral factors. He warns against overemphasizing military genius, "which is above all rules; which amounts to admitting that rules are not only made for idiots, but are idiotic in themselves" (184). He likewise writes that probing the moral factors "like a diligent professor" "all too easily leads to plat-

as for Clausewitz in particular, reliance on a dualistic universe of art and science, mental and material, good and evil, has given rise to some very problematic historical thinking that has frequently spilled over into events.

According to one Clausewitzian dictum, whether on a grand strategic scale or at the level of battle, the selection of political goals or military objectives dictates the level of force used to attain them. To explain events on the Pacific battlefields, however, requires looking beyond the objectives enunciated in abstract, rational plans to grasp as well the unofficial goals or objectives pursued by the men charged with performing the missions. The latter virtually always had an agenda that diverged radically from the Clausewitzian ideal, with profound ramifications on the conduct of battle. Or as Clausewitz wrote in a typical corrective against leaping to easy generalizations, "we must face the fact that war and its forms result from ideas, emotions, and conditions prevailing at the time."[6]

In the course of the Pacific War, Americans, like the Japanese, violated many traditionally accepted limits on the exercise of force such as sparing enemy wounded or prisoners and distinguishing between uniformed combatants and civilian noncombatants.[7] Refusals to take prisoners might be dismissed as isolated acts of barbarity arising from the "passions of battle," but the decisions to employ unrestricted submarine warfare and indiscriminate strategic bombing by means of mass incendiary raids were systematized, approved policies that carried beyond former limits placed on the use of violence. Did these policies represent a temporary expansion of such boundaries or their breakdown altogether?

How this question has been answered illustrates an important problem that has plagued military historiography. The complex relationship among historical acts, instrumentality, and underlying purposiveness has become fragmented in contemporary histories. Consider those histories that focus on aspects of war supposedly governed by "rational" rules and conforming to Clausewitz's dis-

itudes," and "unwittingly we find ourselves proclaiming what everybody knows" (185).

6 Ibid., 580. A slightly different translation of this passage (Anatol Rapoport, ed., Penguin, 1968) reads: "we shall have to grasp that the idea of War, and the form which we give it, proceeds from ideas, feelings, and circumstances which dominate for the moment" (369–70).

7 Primarily in the Anglo–German context, Geoffrey Best discusses traditions and precedents concerning the subjects of "soldiers and civilians," "sea war and the civilian," and "aerial bombardment" in *Humanity in Warfare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 217–24, 240–41, 261–85.

tinction of the "scientific" side of military thought, to which I will hereafter refer as instrumental histories. Uniformed writers and official historians are quintessential "instrumentalists." They invariably direct their attention to such issues as the organization, equipment, and the doctrinal foundations of armies for the purpose of instituting reforms based on their historical studies or publicizing the accomplishments of the services. Since source materials on these topics are usually ample given the profusion of documents militaries manufacture, especially in this century, staff histories may appear, if not convincingly "objective,"[8] at least "scientific."[9] The conventional instrumentalist argument maintains that unrestricted submarine warfare and strategic bombing were rational policies arising simply from the concatenation of technological innovation and grand strategic aims. Likewise, the hill-blasting and cave-smashing side of the Peleliu battle is easily explained in most American histories of the subject by focusing on the weapons, tactics, organization, and logistics – the instrumentalities that enabled the soldiers and marines literally to burn and blast the island landscape, along with those who happened to occupy it.[10] But how were these instrumental or technocratic choices made? Assumptions made, for instance, about how long the Japanese would resist profoundly affected the Peleliu campaign; as did the interservice rivalry between the Marine Corps and Army, fueled by pride and resentment – themselves the products of myths and images.

If instrumental history, representing the "science" of war, often falls short in explaining the forms of combat and battlefield behavior, simple battle narrative, more appropriately exploring the realm of war as art, seldom does much better. Relating the contributions of chance, spirit, military genius, and moral virtue, tra-

8 The problems of objectivity and thoroughness among staff historians associated with specific institutional factions go beyond the scope of my discussion here but are introduced well in Michael Howard, "The Use and Abuse of Military History," *Royal United Service Institute Journal* 107 (February 1962): 4–8.

9 Just as theorists like Clausewitz and Jomini were the products of the Age of Reason, so too did the mantle of scientific rationality surrounding the Rankian school transform military history in the late nineteenth century from a hobby of dilettantes into an instrument of policy that remains with us, in different form, to this day. See Gordon A. Craig, "Delbrück: The Military Historian," in Peter Paret, ed., *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 326–53.

10 Representative of these conventional histories are Samuel Eliot Morison, *Two Ocean War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1963), 493–512; United States Air Force, Historical Division, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, edited by Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, vol. 5, *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 608–27; and Frank O. Hough, *The Island War* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1947), 291–313.

ditional narrative sounds the vicarious call to arms with riveting and colorful accounts, just as staff histories, neatly dissecting plans and movements, emerge from the smoke and bedlam of the battlefield to bring order. Both historical methods clearly lay the groundwork for further scholarly development, but too often the best books inspire derivative reprises of the same stories without any new insights. John Keegan details well the deficiencies that have plagued what he labels "battle pieces." Military historians have long employed euphemism, unstudied misrepresentation, and calculated omission to hide or skirt around disagreeable, unattractive, or complex aspects of combat.[11] Identifying the shortcomings of traditional approaches, however, has proved easier than redressing them.

As Keegan observes, the real dilemma plaguing military historiography does not lie exclusively with an incomplete and antiseptic view of the battlefield itself; it arises also from historians' neglect of internalized ideas and values and the myths and images to which they give rise.[12] Myths as well as machine guns can be highly effective weapons on the battlefield, but the former, being intangibles, are difficult to work with and by definition highly subjective. For these reasons ideas and images are grossly oversimplified or shunned altogether by uniformed and official historians.[13] A balanced interpretation and analysis of any military subject require understanding that seemingly scientific or rational decisions are the product of, and in turn affect, myth and imagination. The trinity Clausewitz identifies is interactive and integrative.

11 John Keegan, *The Face of Battle* (New York: Viking Press, 1976). The historiographical first chapter remains among the best essays on the subject of writing operational military history.

12 Keegan does an excellent job of weaving a vast amount of detail into an interesting and enjoyable narrative, setting a new standard of technical accuracy and directness in the writing of operational history. But although he carries the "battle piece" to new heights of descriptive detail, he concentrates on the empirical aspects of his subject without developing the more problematic conceptual aspect he identifies. For examples see his brief references to British and Commonwealth troops' refusals to take prisoners or his abbreviated treatment of the social origins, recruitment, and training of the Pals battalions (ibid., 48–51, 215–25).

13 Machine guns are the subject of a fascinating history that blends the mythic and instrumental aspects of war to explain why there was so much opposition to their development. Although it was a fabulously useful technological innovation, the machine gun aroused great and lasting opposition for "dehumanizing" combat and robbing it of its moral character. But chivalric or heroic images did not disappear with widespread use of the machine gun in the Great War; instead, praise was frequently heaped upon the enemy's machine gunners for their courage and coolness, as if to attribute the terrific carnage to human, morally responsible agents rather than the machines they served. John Ellis, *The Social History of the Machine Gun* (New York: Arno Press, 1981).

The organization of mass violence in war revolves simultaneously around both personal and collective experience. Campaign histories can be misleading when they reduce individuals who plan and conduct battle to their institutional and group identities to the exclusion of their personal attitudes. At the same time, even soldiers who view their enemies as subhumans act within the framework of an organized military service. The reification of myth and imagination, however unrealistic they may be, often explains events, as Clausewitz suggested, that are incomprehensible according to any military logic. In contrast to the logic imparted to events in instrumental histories, impressionistic, anecdotal recollections, as compiled in Studs Terkel's Pulitzer Prize–winning oral history, "*The Good War*," offer vivid vignettes, but they seldom establish a context in which to interpret events.[14] Synthesizing the two extremes reveals the extent to which the rationalized and systematized management of war arose in reaction to a mythic understanding of events.

The best history to date to provide such a detailed synthesis linking American mythology and imagination with the development of strategic thought and operational decision making is Michael Sherry's *The Rise of American Air Power*. Sherry argues convincingly that the origins of air power are to be found in the American collective imagination: "The bomber was the product of extravagant dreams and dark forebodings about the role it might play in war and peace." Significantly, what Sherry labels the "creation of Armageddon" reached its destructive apotheosis against Japan: not in the atomic bombings of August 1945 but in the mass incendiary raids that began in March. Military leaders, politicians, and the American public all contributed to the devastation visited on Japanese society. The use of the atomic bombs, like the history of strategic bombing, "resulted from choices but not from a moment of choice. Both were the products of a slow accretion of large fears, thoughtless assumptions, and incremental decisions." The same arguments apply to the marines' role in the ground war. To paraphrase Sherry, histories of the marines have been written from other perspectives – tactics, technologies, organizations, and campaigns – and these elements must be accounted for, but practical developments were usually secondary to imagination in shaping ground combat.[15]

The trick for historians is to identify the vast array of ideas and images that may have influenced operations in such unpre-

14 Studs Terkel, "*The Good War*" (New York: Pantheon, 1984).

15 Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), x–xi, 363.

dictable ways. Given the scope and elusive nature of the problem, there can be no definitive, comprehensive solutions; instead, clues to what ideas lay behind various policies and actions are often hidden after the manner of Poe's purloined letter. Language, such as that contained in Halsey's message, was a powerful tool for generating and reshaping images. Moreover, such images could directly alter perceptions and behavior, a fact certainly not lost on the Japanese, who very carefully intertwined linguistics with traditional myth to produce imagery supporting the prosecution of the war.[16] The links between images, ideology, and history are inseparable, or as one scholar of the subject, W. J. T. Mitchell, writes,

> Images are not just a particular kind of sign, but something like an actor on the historical stage, a presence or character endowed with legendary status, a history that parallels and participates in the stories we tell ourselves about our own evolution from creatures "made in the image" of a creator, to creatures who make themselves and their world in their own image.[17]

Although images should not be elevated to the status of autonomous "actors" removed from human control, they might accurately be described as props or costumes for the historical players. Imaginary constructs were key throughout the Pacific War: in precipitating it, in shaping the way it was fought on the battlefield, and in restoring a new equilibrium once peace returned.

Imaginary constructions – groups of images, often of more than one type – varied in form and content and derived from several sources. Mitchell separates images into rough categories, including graphic representations (pictures, photographs), perceptual (appearances, sense data), mental (dreams, memories, ideas), and verbal (metaphors, descriptions). Paralleling the duality between "objective" and "subjective" in military histories, the first two are, arguably, the more "objective" or at least publicly shared images, and, in contrast, the last two are obviously solely creations of the individual mind.[18] All images, however, are perceived and interpreted differently, depending on the background and experiences of the observer and on the specific circumstances under which the images are encountered. The contextual element is particularly

16 For a specific example see Dower's discussion of the so-called Kyoto School of ideologues (*War without Mercy*, 226–28). A more general polemic on the subject is Saburō Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).

17 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 9.

18 Ibid., 10–13.

important for historians who explore the influence of images on behavior.

An excellent contribution to the subject of soldiers' imaginary construction and ordering of their world is Eric J. Leed's book *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in the First World War*. Far from obscuring the true nature of war, Leed maintains, myth and imagination often serve to amplify it:

> [I]t is arguable that, in general, the myths and fantasies of war cannot be regarded as false imprints of phenomenal realities. They were the necessary articulation of the combatant's experience of realities. . . . The technological actualities [of the front] . . . eviscerated previous conceptions of war and the warrior. The myths and fantasies of war attempt to revive these conceptions in a new landscape. They attempt to close the gap between the surprising realities of life and initial expectations.[19]

Myth shaped expectations going into battle the first time, the actual experiences of battle, and the ways those experiences were remembered and given meaning afterward. Paradoxically, for example, some Germans found liberation in images of the "machine," whereas British memoirists tended to see the machine as their downfall.[20] Given the imperfections of human perception, the limits of the combatants' horizons, and the inadequacies of words to give expression and meaning to actual experiences, myth is, Leed argues, an essential outgrowth of war. Although it is not Leed's purpose to go into operational details or explore in great depth how myth and imagination were manipulated to mold battle itself, he establishes a synthesis of myth and instrumentality that could significantly expand upon the traditional accounts.

Within the context of the entire Pacific War it would be difficult to examine the influence of imaginary constructs – that is, groupings of images that define a "reality" – divorced from the objects or attitudes that gave rise to them. Aside from the sheer scope of such a project, the precise nature of this influence and its evolution over time and with experience differ drastically depending on where the focus lies. Policy and doctrine governing air or naval warfare, for

19 Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 116.

20 Comparing European memoirs of the First World War to American memoirs of the Second, British works, like Edmund Blunden's *Undertones of War* and Robert Graves's *Goodbye to All That*, are closer in tone to those of American citizen-soldiers, like J. Glenn Gray's *The Warriors* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), whereas the tone of German books, like Ernst Jünger's *Im Stahlgewittern* and *Feuer und Blut* reflects more closely the warrior mentality and celebration of martial ability often present in the Marine memoirs to come out of the Pacific.

instance, were largely the products of abstract conceptualization. The sites of decision making were much farther removed both spatially and emotionally from the scene of battle than was possible in the ground war. In addition, the informal, grass roots interaction and adaptation that characterized land battle resulted in myths different from those of the naval and air wars because there was no dominant technology or machine that mediated between men and events. The attitudes, images, and myths of the infantrymen who fought the Japanese at close quarters carried greater resonance on the battlefield and, however indirectly, within the planning agencies of ground commands than did those of the submarine captains or bomber pilots inside COMSUBPAC or SAC.

An iconographic study of America in the Pacific War reveals many of the inconsistencies, ironies, and paradoxes in our conception of those events that left a swath of destruction extending from Pearl Harbor to Nagasaki. Ideas expressed through visual images were powerful and lasting, and none remains more famous in the American iconography of the war than Joseph Rosenthal's Pulitzer Prize–winning photograph of the flag being raised on Mount Suribachi. But contrast the image conveyed by the Marine Corps War Memorial with those contained in the scrapbook of a common marine. As a young Marine corporal in the 3d Armored Amphibian Battalion (which was attached to the First Marine Division on Peleliu and Okinawa), Werner Claussen assembled a photo album that captured not only scenes he wanted to remember but ideas and feelings of the time. Rosenthal's picture reflected a heroic and stirring reality of the Pacific War on one level, but just as surely, Claussen's pictures of young American men grinning self-consciously at the camera, bare-breasted Polynesian women provocatively posed, and badly disfigured Japanese corpses all captured realities of the war on other levels.[21] With the years of reassessment that followed the events and feelings captured in these pictures, the inter-relationships between these realities have been simplified and compartmentalized to the point that Rosenthal's and Claussen's photographs appear virtually unrelated. This process is in itself important for deciphering the meaning of events and as a mechanism for individual and collective healing.

21 Werner Claussen Papers, Personal Papers Collection (PPC), Marine Corps Historical Center (MCHC). Claussen's pictures show slightly more variety than those in most of the other scrapbooks, but in terms of the general iconographic categories represented, his collection is quite typical. For insights into the shifting meanings ascribed to the Rosenthal picture see Karal Ann Marling and John Wetenhall, *Iwo Jima: Monuments, Memories, and the American Hero* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

Joe Rosenthal's photograph of the Mount Suribachi flag raising is the most enduring American icon of the Second World War. *(Joe Rosenthal and AP/ Wide World Photos)*

For Claussen and his comrades – and ironically for the men pictured in Rosenthal's photograph as well[22] – the heroic image conveyed in the Suribachi flag raising was an essentially mythic reality that arose later, after the fighting. The subjects of Claussen's scrapbook were the reality with which they were concerned at the time: camaraderie and belonging, sexual fantasy and role playing, killing and death. Circumstances did not allow the luxury of a dispassionate or "objective" view of their actions. The emotional, psychic distancing from the events of battle could come only after the physical separation from the scene of action.

If photographs provide one set of insights into the imagery of

22 Only three of the six men pictured survived the war. Ira Hayes, one of the survivors of the flag raising, was unable to reconcile the mythic reality surrounding that moment on Mount Suribachi and the celebrity that attended it with the realities of life on an Indian reservation after the war, where he died, a confused and tragic alcoholic. The irony of his story was also recognized by Hollywood in a movie about Hayes appropriately called *The Outsider*. Histories of him include William Bradford Huie, *The Hero of Iwo Jima and Other Stories* (New York: Signet, 1962), and Albert Hemingway, *Ira Hayes: Pima Marine* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 1988). For the best brief overview see Marling and Wetenhall, *Iwo Jima*, 170–94.

Werner Claussen's scrapbook captured both images and feelings of the war that he wanted to preserve: the camaraderie and belonging; sexual fantasy and role playing; killing and death. *(Personal Papers Collection, Marine Corps Historical Center)*

battle, language offers another. Visual images tend to provoke immediate, often heightened emotional responses, whereas verbal images go through an interpretive process in an individual's mind that may be just as evocative as a visual image, but more muted. Consider the gulf between the events as experienced by the individual riflemen and the same events as described in the carefully clipped language of a battalion logbook. On 20 May 1945, the 2d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment,[23] attacked Japanese positions around Wana Draw on Okinawa. Among the attackers, marines of G Company ran into heavy fire from Japanese cave positions almost as soon as they rose up to advance. Several were killed in the first few minutes, and others were wounded and had to be carried back to the battalion aid station. Pinned down by the enemy fire, the company commander called on battalion headquarters for support to suppress the Japanese positions, in particular a group of caves on his left flank. In response, the battalion commander released a gun tank and two flamethrower tanks to come forward and saturate the area with high explosives and streams of napalm. While this was happening, however, the marines remained under concentrated fire and several more men were hit. The situation deteriorated further when the tankers, whose vision was limited to the small periscopes inside the vehicles, became confused as to the precise location of the Japanese positions and began firing into the marines' positions. At the same time as men scrambled for cover from this "friendly fire," the company commander became a casualty (whether the result of American or Japanese fire is not clear), and the executive officer had to take charge and attempt to sort out the chaos. Here are the same events exactly as recorded in the battalion message log:

Time	*To*	*From*	*Message*
1105	Vulcan Sk Bay	Vulcan George	Need Stretcherbearers
1145	Vulcan George	Vulcan 3 [battalion operations officer]	A regular beetle and two zippoes are coming around your right flank to work over your left.

23 In accordance with conventional usage, the three regiments of infantry and one of artillery in the First Marine Division will generally be referred to as the 1st, 5th, 7th, and 11th Marines, respectively. The three component battalions in each infantry regiment will be given in shorthand, battalion number/regiment, e.g., 1/1, 2/1, 3/1 or 1/5, 2/5, 3/5. To avoid confusion, the division will always be spelled out, either the First Marine Division or First Division, and the regiment will be labeled simply the 1st Marines.

1150	Vulcan George 6 [company commander]	Vulcan 3	It won't be long until beetles clear out the area on your left front. The beetles and zippoes are working there now[;] as soon as you can take the beetles that are there now and move out.
1153	Vulcan	Vulcan George	More stretcherbearers
1230	Vulcan 3	Vulcan George 5 [co. executive officer]	Our own tanks are firing into our own left flank platoon... Vulcan George 6 has just been hit

The log continues, bearing messages from other companies, from adjacent units, and providing many details of a costly, partially successful assault, another day of combat in a long, draining campaign.[24]

Logs such as this are history of a special sort. They were a starting point for instrumental reforms: staff officers read these messages and concluded that extra men would have to be detailed as stretcher-bearers and better measures established for the infantry to identify targets for the tanks. These logs were major source documents for the official Marine Corps histories of military operations in the Pacific. How events on the ground were described also serves to record the desensitization and reordering of brutal, terrifying, nonrational moments in hundreds of men's lives. Keegan describes the value of this process in the training and indoctrination of Sandhurst cadets:

> [B]y teaching the young officer to organize his intake of sensations, to reduce the events of combat to as few and as easily recognizable a set of elements as possible, to categorize... the noise, blast, passage of missiles and confusion of human movement... as 'incoming fire', 'outgoing fire', 'airstrike', 'company-strength attack', one is helping [the future officer] to avert the onset of fear or, worse, of panic and to perceive a face of battle which, if not familiar, and certainly not friendly, need not, in the event, prove wholly petrifying.[25]

24 2d Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, Log Journal Sheet for 20 May 1945, Record Group (RG) 127/65A-5188/Box 23/file A39-2. This is not a complete copy of the message traffic monitored by the battalion headquarters.

25 Keegan, *The Face of Battle*, 22.